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BY SUNS AND STARS

BY SUNS AND STARS

BY
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BY SUNS AND STARS

THE SONG OF THE WEST

THE Lord hath set her portals by the sea,
Afront the rolling tide of India's flood,
Whereon the vagrant winds blow lustily,
Whereon the red sun dies in sheets of blood.
With jutting cape she bites the heaving blue,
Or sucks it into estuary and bay,
Or cradles it on sandy beach to woo
Sea-urchins through the drowsy summer day.

With jarrah canopies she crowns her hills ;
She flakes her slopes with many-coloured blooms
And in her valleys, cleft by crooning rills,
The graceful bracken flaunts its froned plumes.
She shrouds the silent plain in spinifex,
And drapes it in a dim mysterious veil ;
And there she limns the false mirage that becks
The lost prospector on a hopeless trail.

She hath a song for all who care to hear,
A melody that throbs at flush of day,
And falls soft-toned upon the list'ning ear—
A chorus where a million voices play,

By Suns and Stars

When in its length the land gives daily praise
To God, and ev'ry tiny-throated thing
Of life takes up the tune in tender phrase—
Then, rising with the sun, I heard her sing:

“My need is love. For long, so long, I slept
That, waking suddenly, the warm desire
Of fertile birth and motherhood has leapt
Through ev'ry vein, and flamed me with its fire;
And passion, garnered through long centuries
Of dreamless sleep, bids me unveil and yield
To love. I hear his whisper in the breeze,
And yearn to see his presence stand revealed.

“I want to be awakened in the morn
By tripping feet of children on my breast;
I want the incense of the rip'ning corn
When night is near to lull me into rest.
I want the warm caress of sturdy men,
Who stroke my neck and shoulders with the share,
And clothe my shape with verdant herbage when
The blazing sun of autumn lays me bare.

“I wear no lustrous emeralds on my robe;
My garb is grey, my skirts are dusty brown,
Yet from their folds, for all who care to probe,
Gay gold is yielded for the victor's crown;

The Song of the West

And in my undulating flanks I hold
A rich fecundity that only waits
The virile touch of man to give tenfold
Beyond the wants which hungry care creates.

“For those who hate I hold chastising whips—
Red is my wrath and ruthless is my hand
When those to whom I offer smiling lips
Turn with derision to another land ;
But when they love I nurse them in my arms,
I furnish them with corn and oil and wine ;
I still their wailings in the night alarms—
They are my children and their woes are mine.”

By Suns and Stars

BREAK O' DAY

THE stars that fell from the sky last night
Lie thick on the freshened grass ;
The East is stippled with amber light,
Like the ripple of molten brass.
The wakened dawn, with a scented sigh,
Swings out of the billowed hills,
And, waving her new-lit torch on high,
The vault of the heavens fills.
Through drowsy hollows the sun-shafts slide,
And tickle the dreaming pools,
Or scatter the mists of the fretted tide
Where the cascade winds her spools.
Beneath the frown of the stately gums
You can see the wattles blush
Like a bashful bride, as the daylight comes
With his captivating rush.
He shakes the sprays with a warm embrace,
And kisses their golden tips,
As a lover who finds his lady's face
Is drawn to her ardent lips.

Break o' Day

That magpie yonder, with organ throat,
Is chanting his morning peal ;
The choir of the bush has caught his note,
And echoes his mirthful zeal.
The dews that slept in the dark ravines
When the sun recalled his rays,
Creep ghost-like out of their leafy screens,
And totter their feeble ways.
High up in the wind the wayward leaves
Are whispering last night's dreams,
When fairies fought with the demon thieves,
And mated their artful schemes.
This is the morn of many a morn
That my restless eyes have seen,
But day would be as a friend forlorn
If he brought no soothing queen—
No Eve with a smile serene.

Come forth, sweetheart, from your couch of
down,
Where the dream-king holds the throne ;
Of sunbeam gold I have built a crown,
With a star across its zone.
And I have jewelled the chaplet gay
With a borrowed rainbow's hues ;
So come, beloved, to the realms of day,
And the darkling hours confuse.
That artist Night, in his garb of gloom,
Has copied your wondrous hair,

By Suns and Stars

With here the curl of an opening bloom,
And a trailing tendril there.
His cunning forge in the shrouded glade
Through the drooping hours has shone,
And there with mallet and subtle blade
He has joined the young shoots on.
He filled the cups of the flowers rim-high
With the scent your lips distil,
And stole a beam from your curtained eye
To sparkle an errant rill.
The luscious curves of your virgin breast,
With the ruby tips revealed,
He took for a lily's milky crest,
And a poppy's crimson shield.
On hill and dale he has stamped your seal
In witching colour and line ;
The anxious buds on the vine conceal
The thread of your rich design.
By strife I wrested the throne from Night,
And the world belongs to you ;
The sweat I spent in the fearful fight
Has drenched the bushes in dew.
But by my strong right hand I have won,
And the sooty foe has fled.
The bushland beckons the morning sun,
And Life laughs lightly, for Death is dead—
Death died last night in his bed.

Sun-Fall

SUN-FALL

THE pilot with the golden ball,
Who steers the wide-beamed ship of day,
Has caught the ebb-tide's flooding fall,
And seaward drifts his solemn way.

The cloudy bannerets that flew
In streaming splendour round his head,
Athwart the stately stretch of blue,
Are gushing sympathy in red.

Down to the fading west he bears
His freight of human joys and woes ;
On sickened hopes and thickened cares
The shutters of his hatches close.

His crew has scoured the crowded hives,
Where men are bought and men are sold ;
Grey fate has gambled with their lives,
And dropped the pieces in his hold.

The stalwart peaks that front the sea
Have eased the fervour of their gaze ;
White mists are rising creepingly,
And dim their view with hoary haze.

By Suns and Stars

The pocked and splintered battlements
By tender dews are blotted out ;
The staring raw and rugged rents
With fleecy shawls are wrapped about.

From slipways moist a wet-nurse steals,
And beads the bruised and tumbled leaves.
Her damp hand touches and it heals ;
By broken blooms she stoops and grieves.

The nighting things whose world is dusk
Are tremulous for eager fray ;
With silent lance and tiny tusk
They probe the remnants of the day.

Some one old creek, whose ancient bed
Was livened by an ardent flow,
Sheds scanty tears through boulders dead,
And drones a shaking chant of woe.

The few recluse and guarded ponds
That lay in battle with the glare
Are beckoning the bending fronds
To veil with wreaths their bosoms bare.

An unseen sprite strews fiery dust
Upon the blackened firmament ;
Around the mountain's jagged crust
A crescent of rare gold is bent.

Sun-Fall

A shadow monk from shadow lands,
Of face austere and sombre stole,
With widened and menacing hands
Lays fearful penance on the soul.

Now is the hour when men confess
Their spirit's vague and vagrant flight
Across the lengthened wilderness
That flanks the sombre rim of night.

The air is clamorous with faults
That ghoulish night has disinterred
From secret and forgotten vaults
Whose chambers hold the hidden word.

Each bush is pregnant with a threat,
Each shadow holds calamity,
And I must brave their biting fret
Through hours of dreadful mystery.

Then in the pendant cloud of doom,
With shackled eyes I kneel and pray
To Him who from this musty gloom
In kindness breeds another day.

By Suns and Stars

THE SUNS

THE day is drowsing in a swoon
 Upon the ripples of a sea of light ;
 And slow and dulled with vapour is his sight,
Against the searching furnace of high noon ;
And these poor hours that drag in shotted shoon,
 Where once their pinions revelled in a flight
 Towards the dusky borderland of night
Will find him mirrored in a flooded moon.

Now is the season of the corn and fruits,
 The grape voluptuous, with amber beads,
 The pencilled peaches and the purple plums ;
Now is the triumph of the tawny roots ;
 Now is the fullness of the striving seeds ;
 And sweated man into his harvest comes.

The Rains

THE RAINS

I SING no Winter draped in frozen snows,
Nor shrouded in a veil of clinging sleet;
But Winter, tripping on a million feet
Of dancing raindrops; on whose garment glows
The velvet sweetness of the twining rose,
With garlands of the silver marguerite;
Whose skirt is bordered green with bursting
wheat;
Whose breath wafts scents on ev'ry breeze that blows.

Long months the wan grey earth has lain beneath
The overpow'ring ardour of the sun,
Whose flames have ravished her and left her
bare;
But now at Winter's touch she weaves a wreath
Of all-concealing greenery, that none
May see the scars of Summer's passion there.

By Suns and Stars

THE SAPLING

THE black seed, bursting, gives to life a tree,
Which points its tiny sepals at the sky,
And waves its leaves, like wings, as if to fly
The sordid base of its captivity.
The tender branchlet holds no memory
Of dank recesses where its forbears lie—
No stain of earth offends the captious eye—
No rust of mould obscures its greenery.

So when in sullen soil thy seed was set
And watered by a thousand bloody tears,
From that foul grime there sprang in purity
A sapling, virginal as Spartan maid,
That, wresting substance from the falling years
Raised in thy heart the tree of Liberty.

The Union

THE UNION

No angry menace of a hostile foe,
 No blatant barking of a loud-mouthed gun,
 No rush of shiv'ring fear, has made us one
Within our tide-borne ring of indigo ;
But brothers spoke in brotherhood, and, lo,
 The barriers fell like mists before the sun,
 And newly-wakened Love arose and spun
The strands which bind our fates for weal or woe.

God grant the Union peace, the peace that holds
Security. God grant us liberal moulds
In which to shape ourselves, and forge us strong
Each one too proud to do the other wrong ;
Each one too brave to lift a tyrant hand ;
Each growing wiser as the years expand.

By Suns and Stars

THE SOUTHERN BRIDE

BEHIND the close-hung curtains of the past,
Whose woof was woven from the filmy space
Wherein the gods make playground, she, the last
Of Earth's implorant childling, rose in place.
No rite conventional, no parchment script,
Bore witness to her coming. In the night
The love that gave her being first was lipped,
While the pale stars withdrew their gentle light,
And all the rolling chariots of Time
Were still'd. Then, with the scented morning breeze,
She drew her living from the peaks sublime,
And took her station in the southern seas.

Gay dawns and amber sunsets, in their glow,
Made rich her colour and endowed her land;
And the clean wavelets in their lapping flow
Washed white the circling border of her strand.
The tempest and the wind brought fruitfulness,
The painted apple and the ample grain,
The silk-tipped corn, the flavour of the press,
The luxury of riverside and plain;
And living waters on the mountain side,
Or stately streams, whose deep and potent flood
Quenches the fiery drought, and freshens wide
The thirsty pasture with enriching blood.

The Southern Bride

The earth in mighty straining sweated gold,
The shackled sea in sympathy wept gems,
That he who came a-wooing might behold
Her crested with a thousand diadems.
And she was ribbed with wondrous ores and steel,
And rooted to the universal heart,
That all the burden of a commonweal
Might find her trussed secure in ev'ry part.
Yet loth to bind the impulse of a soul,
She held great spaces where the froward few,
Who dare to tamper with an ancient scroll,
Could in the free expanse enhance her view.

The ache of motherhood was in her veins,
A tender yearning for the feeble ones
Whose life is dyed with the incessant stains
Of toil, to nurse them into sturdy sons.
To those encompassed by the rings of caste
She offered freedom and the right to rise ;
No stern tradition of the faded past
Laid ruthless handicap upon the prize.
Her ways were clear, with stretches of clear light
Wherein the meek and lowly might outspan,
And view unhampered, in ascending flight,
The pathway to the eminence of man.

But as her bosom leaked its fruitful store
Into the thirsting mouths, with that same stream
She blended courage for the seasons sore
And sanity to mesh the sprightly dream.

By Suns and Stars

For noble ardour must implant its roots
Within the stony soil of duty ere
The thrusting branches hold the fullest fruit,
Or the rich bloom of crowned achievement bear.
Assured love is in tribulation born,
And strengthened by the bitter blows of fate.
The tender rose surmounts the stabbing thorn,
And proud rewards on spurred endeavour wait.

The cross that blazes on her crest is not
An idle bauble flung in lavish mood ;
The token prints upon her children's lot,
The sacrifice and bond of holy-rood.
By each white point she counts a virtue sworn,
That prudence shall with fortitude combine,
And in the clash of quarrels yet unborn
Stand stark beneath the shadow of the sign.
The badge that beckoned in the centuries
When man was creeping to the higher goal
In this new land is flaunted to the breeze—
The outer symbol of the inner soul.

She spread a sun-tanned wilderness to test
The merits of her kind, and forests deep
In sleuth to urge them on her rugged quest
That leads for ever to the upward steep.
She swung the sharp-edged drought across their fields
And scathed their flocks with desolating sword ;

The Southern Bride

She bit their crops and pinched the lavish yields
Of corn to strengthen them before the Lord.
She sucked the waters of their springs, and set
A false mirage upon the changing sands ;
The elements assailed, but, loving yet,
She worked new wonders in their lonely lands.

The silent desert quivers with her songs,
The barren boulders break in martial strains,
When to the roll of Heaven's thund'rous gongs
The firmament dissolves in luscious rains ;
While secret seeds warm to her mother-feel,
And rear their tribute in a green array,
And the torn places of her body heal
With fragrant unguents that defy decay.
Then on the murmur of the crowded leaves
She blows the trumpet note of hope, and calls
Her weary legion to the clust'ring sheaves
That gather fieldwards as the harvest falls.

You who have drawn her vigour with the breath
That first inspired your mortal crust of clay ;
You who have sought her when the wings of death
Swept ominously close upon their prey ;
You who have spoken her on lonely trails,
Where nothing is and everything begins,
Where the great God, with sigh, lifts up the veils,
And lets the sunlight shudder on your sins ;

By Suns and Stars

You who have sat with her on ev'nings grey,
When the lost stars lit hurried lamps above,
And timid torrents whined their rocky way—
Has she unbosomed aught to you but love?

By her lone hills and by her reddened plains,
By stealthy valleys and by ancient falls,
By gorges where a mystic silence reigns,
Save for the echo when the magpie calls ;
For thought-worn vigils in the droving nights,
For cloistered labour in the reeking drives,
For shining furrows where the ploughshare bites,
And the lean bushman in his mission strives—
In the rich current of her tawny fleece,
In the excess and riot of her gold,
In her wide acres' bearing and increase,
She pays the claims of love a thousandfold.

The Pledge

THE PLEDGE

YOUR lands were set for the coming, your shores were
clear of foes ;
League upon league of pasture yearned for your whetted
hoes ;
Upland, plain, and valley were tight with the fat of
earth, .
And the keen grass locked its fibres to hold their stirring
birth.
All these things were given ; and the Cross in the sky
above
Was set as a pledge of Labour—of Labour and of
Love—
That in the unhewn forest, the clean and virgin plain,
Your hands should gather the harvest of wood and wine
and grain ;
Nor bind a weaker vessel with crafty script and claim
To sweat in the naked furrows while you lay in idle
shame ;
That as you laboured together in tempest or in shine,
So in the hour of sorrow your hearts would interwine ;
Shoulder to shoulder in danger, knee to knee in praise ;
Thus would you live as brothers in the fullness of your
days.

By Suns and Stars

Now is the time accomplished—what have your children
done?

A hundred years are reckoned—how does your record
run?

True to their pledge, our sons have borne their meed of
toil,

Spacing the thick-set forest, nursing the loosened
soil.

The dawn has heard their footsteps, till night their axes
flew,

And out in the lonely backlands their scattered home-
steads grew.

They faced the changing seasons, they fought the sullen
drought,

Where the steel-tipped sun bit deepest, and sucked the
waters out.

They scented the earth's snug treasures, they probed her
secret veins;

Yet roving, free, and resourceful, little they counted the
gains.

Man to man was their motto, solid as steel without
flaw,

Thus they fulfilled the compact, thus they obeyed the
law.

And not by muscle alone did our sons their burden
bear—

In days of stress and clamour they wrought by speech
and prayer

The Pledge

That the laws they furthered be just to the helpless as
the strong,
Nor cloak in pious silence an all-pervading wrong.
Staunch they stand to their measures, by the written
word abide,
For the trust that was laid upon them they lived and
fought and died.

Good! for the fight is freedom. Good! for the task is
theirs
To cherish the weeping million into a million heirs—
Heirs to the Lord's own kingdom of corn and fruit and
vine,
Who, when He gave you children, saith "All these things
be thine."
Now in the years of abundance the pledge shall be
renewed,
Yet shall they hold it gravely, temperate, patient,
subdued.
By the strength of the older nations their strength must
be compared ;
They have bidden the world give hearing—their terms
have been declared,
Their house must be set in order, the weaker walls made
good ;
No rift must show in the timber of a trustful brother-
hood.
Then, as they stand united, so long as the Cross
endures,

By Suns and Stars

The pledge they have given and taken shall shelter you
and yours.

Free of the taint of serfdom, stout in your children's
right,

In the sight of the Lord of All Things you shall be His
delight.

And as He giveth His blessing, tenfold shall your tribe
increase—

Reliant, certain, and faithful, then shall your land know
peace.

“Sentry Go”

“SENTRY GO”

“SENTRY, what of the night? The darkness hems us
round;

The sky is black with menace; the sea has caught the
sound;

The omens press their summons on lands devoid of
life—

Who holds the vacant acres must hold by strength in
strife.

The pledge is laid upon you to keep your island
white—

Does each hand hold a rifle? Sentry, what of the
night?”

“Our watch-fires burn behind us, our arms are at our
sides,

And hard by silent ranges the sturdy bushman rides;
He read the evil portent where plains lay burnt and
bare,

And broke the leagues of distance as only bushmen
dare.

No conscript net has bound him, no barracks claimed
his soul,

But in the fight for freedom his name is on the roll.

By Suns and Stars

“This continent is veined with rich Australian pride;
Our fathers brewed its courage before they fell and
died.

To seaward stands our fortress, but landward is our
heart;

By arsenal or desert we fight our stubborn part;
And if by fate and fortune we make the downward
path,

Let life and hope together assuage the Maker's wrath.

“Britannia gave us honour; her seed is scattered
here,

And shall it rot in bondage, or shrink in craven fear?
The blood that bought dominion by frequent stress and
strain

Shall hold our land together, as it has held the main.
Nor shall we quake at struggle, nor wear the easy
smile

That waits upon dishonour and smooths the path of
guile.

“Australia's life is open, she needs no coward's
smirk;

Unto her sons is granted the right to live and work;
And by her daily vigils and by her nightly glean
She holds the white race wholesome and keeps her
markets clean.

And if her children prattle, and if her fathers glow,
Remember she is watching, alert, at sentry-go.”

The Call

THE CALL

FROM that lone island in the Northern Sea,
Hard-guarded by the undulating wave,
Whose reddened meadows bore us ancestry,
And nourished freedom in an unkempt grave,
Through water and rough earth a summons leapt
To frozen zones and to abundant spring,
To those who vigil held and those who slept,
"Come ye, my children, and salute the King."

The tide of eager blood that flowed afar
When liberty unloosed the stiffened gates
And flung the doorway of new worlds ajar
Paused in its purpose, laid aside its freights,
And hearkened to the message with hot heart;
And then the wash that licked each distant wall,
Or scoured new runnels on a vacant chart,
Rolled back in flooded splendour to the call.

They came, these sons of Empire, with keen face,
And corded back and shoulders resolute,
And bold. Stern nature bred them true to race,
And circumstances little changed their suit.

By Suns and Stars

Not children these, but bearded men and strong,
Firm in their father's faith and straight in
thought;

Theirs were the widened ways and spaces long
Who simple homage to their Sov'reign brought.

He greeted them with candour and gave speech,
And laid warm welcome on their rugged hands.
He knew himself their leagues of lonely beach,
He knew the mysteries of all their lands.
The sea that held the home inviolate
Had served his passages to every clime,
While yet the ermine of his high estate
Was folded in the spacious robe of time.

Not children these, but brothers to the bone,
Knights of his table, equal in their right,
Proud of his person, jealous of his Throne,
And threefold jealous of his country's might.
Not theirs the servile service of the lip,
Nor sweetened speech, but unaffected deed.
Their armour rested on the loin and hip,
They stood for ready duty at his need.

As such he gave them counsel and his grace,
And showed the path of inner brotherhood,
With penalty and burden of high place;
And, marvelling, they heard and understood

The Call

That he who spoke was helmsman at the wheel,
And when the feast and pageantry were done,
With oath affirmed and charged with freshened zeal
In sobered step they parted one by one.

By Suns and Stars

MY COUNTRYWOMAN

I SING my countrywoman, she whose charms
Illuminate the city's rigid ways :
She of the clear and amber-tinted arms,
And eyes like sunshine leaping through a haze ;
Whose finished form is moulded to display
The vain accomplishments of fashion's art ;
Who stands the goddess of the fruitful day,
And tribute levies on each swollen mart ;
She whose light battery of dulcet smiles
Is flanked by a brigade of solemn tears ;
Whose tempting pout and fondling touch beguiles
The greedy hand of commerce from its shears.

I sing her also in the lonely lands,
With crowded trees as valiant sentinels
Towards a rude invasion ; their gaunt hands
Atwist against the axe that bleeds their cells ;
She, the kind mate of him whose finished toil
Is but the cradle of new work begun,
Where the insistent voices of the soil
In concert rake the heart from sun to sun.

My Countrywoman

There, loose-apparelled, with protective mien,
She courts her fledglings from a humble pen,
And with full breast and easy, careless wean,
Becomes the mother of a breed of men.

Aye, but I sing her heart, that priceless urn,
Wherein the virtues of great Heaven drain,
And in whose chamber of sweet honour burn
To dross and ashes each ignoble strain ;
That takes the twisted ore of self, and mills
It into gentle shape ; whose burdened jars
Of lavish love, dew-fragrant from the stills,
Are stolen stealthily beneath the stars ;
Whose essence warms the senses to a glow,
And the pale face of misery uplifts,
And like clean rain upon the waters low
Breaks softly in a shower of tender gifts.

By Suns and Stars

THE BOUQUET'S BURDEN

A HALF-MOON leant on the eastern hills
As I flung the window wide,
And I saw the sky grow opal-white
In the wash of her silver tide.
A wandering breeze went drifting by,
And sang in a minor key,
And I told my love in its careless ear
For want of sympathy.

'Twas told by the wind to a bold sunflower,
Who reared his head in pride ;
He spoke the tale to a shy sweet pea,
Who drooped her blooms and sighed ;
She dropt the words to the flowers beneath,
And all in the garden knew—
The while a cricket chirped his song—
That I was in love with you.

The story ran from flower to flower,
With all its sad refrain,
That though my love lay at your feet
You passed it with disdain ;

The Bouquet's Burden

And, when their fibres felt the stress
Of this emotion new,
They hung their heads in mute regret,
And wept in tears of dew,

I rose this morn when in the east
The sky was stained with red,
And plucked the sympathizing blooms
Still wet with tears half-shed ;
I wrought them in a cunning bunch,
Of mingled white and hue,
And now I send this brave bouquet
To bear my love to you.

By Suns and Stars

THE CHALLENGE

I PAUSED as the woman was passing ;
The crowd flung me out of my place ;
But her roving eyes swung in their orbits,
And focussed their glance on my face.
A moment it lit, and then vanished
As swift as the swing of a bird,
And left me with eyes that were swimming,
And ears that but vacantly heard.
And all that my brain could remember,
As I shook myself up with a start,
Were insolent eyes that were staring
Through mine to the depth of my heart.
Grey eyes could not glance with that boldness,
Nor blue with that passionate light,
Nor brown, with their deep amber softness—
But only orbs black as the night.
And they must be liquid and gleaming,
Like metal grey-hot from the fire,
And full of a tentative meaning
That quickens the flame of desire.

The Challenge

Shall I take up the challenge she threw me—
The lightly-cast taunt of her sex,
That womanhood dangles before us
While binding her chains on our necks?
Shall I bite at the lure of the tempter,
Red lips, with their subtle demand;
Or crouch, like a dingo in hiding,
If Prudence but lift up her hand?
Shall I call myself man or a nithing?
Shall I churn my red blood into milk?
Shall I flee at the shimmer of satin,
Or faint at the rustle of silk?
Shall I hang in the wind when a woman
Gives signal to follow her? No!
Should pleasure or pain be the profit,
The gods may decide. I shall go.

By Suns and Stars

THE PENITENT

DEAR little one, and have you waited,
Content, your hand within Time's arm,
While I have roamed away, unsated,
Remem'bring not your winsome charm?

Some bolder eyes than thine must surely
Have flashed their flame across the sea,
And I did venture, unsecurely,
On phantom tracts away from thee.

By shelly beaches I have wandered,
And busy paths have known my quest;
In wanton cities I have squandered
A heritage to move one breast.

And like a spendthrift whose profusion
Has wrecked the fullness of his store,
And poverty, with bold intrusion,
Knocks on the lintel of his door.

The Penitent

I, having nothing left but remnants,
 Feel diffident to offer these,
And shrink to vex your kind remembrance
 With sparkless dregs and tasteless lees.

My palaces to dust have crumbled,
 And shame is heaped upon my head;
My pride is eaten up, and, humbled,
 I walk alone in shoes of lead.

My nut-brown locks have grown more precious
 Through scarcity, and Time, with sighs
Has flung a net of graven meshes
 About the corners of my eyes.

Perhaps I wrong him and his spinners,
 Maybe their traces are but thin,
And I exaggerate, as sinners,
 Repentant, magnify their sin.

So, taking courage in my trouble,
 I loose my heart-strings to your hand;
Who offers quickly offers double,
 And thus I meet your just demand.

Dear little one, do you remember
 Our parting by the garden gate?
Sly Love, that mischievous dissembler,
 Betrayed me and reversed my fate.

By Suns and Stars

You heard the string of wild romances
That chased each other on my lip;
You gently smiled, and in your glances
I read a wondrous fellowship.

Yet as a dolt who follows pleasure
With vision darkened and unwise,
And holds the mirror as the treasure,
I missed the secret of your eyes.

I wonder, in my better learning,
If those swift gleams that crossed their plane
Were flashes from your heart's warm burning,
Like firelight on a window pane.

To-morrow, dear, a boat is sailing;
My heart is hot, I cannot wait;
And if a prayer be still availing
I pray to meet you by the gate.

The Vindication

THE VINDICATION

HE sought his fate in a shaded seat
Where spangled night and the moist dusk meet,
Away from the tread of sandalled feet

That threshed the glowing room.

The scented pea and the mignonette
With ev'ning dew and their balm were wet,
And high in the eaves green girdles met

In one resplendent bloom.

An opal light shed a vagrant ray
Through twisted vines and the locked array
Of curling tendrils, to where she lay,

Like Venus in repose.

The arum leaves reared a stalwart shield,
And painted pennons upon its field,
With waving shadows, but half-concealed

Her tiny, tempting toes.

The haze, that hung on the night's black tress,
On cheek and hand threw a soft caress,
And heaped the curves of her silken dress,
And toned its wondrous dyes.

By Suns and Stars

But clear as the vestal's temple flare,
And burning blue as the sapphire rare,
And deep as the heaven's cloudless stare,
The light shone in her eyes.

He spoke of wealth and its gorgeous train,
Of pleasure throned on a golden wain,
And lordly life with its wide disdain,
And idle hands to choose.
He threaded a tale of luxury,
Of emerald land and turquoise sea,
And splendid spaces where souls were free—
She tapped her beaded shoes.

He marvelled honour and high estate,
The spacious halls where a thousand wait,
And self is hidden in robes of state,
And rank repels all doubt.
Where power is veiled in a blue-veined hand,
And fate is hung on an auburn strand,
Where few may sit and the many stand—
She answered with a pout.

His ardour shook as her shining breast
Behind its laces reclined to rest,
But fainting courage regained its zest
Before her luscious charms.

The Vindication

Her beauty stood as a queenly gage,
A trophy fit for a knightly wage,
And daunting hazards, in lofty rage,
 He caught her in his arms.

He crushed her close as a strong man can,
For she was a maid and he a man,
And so it was since the world began,
 The woman answered yea.
He kissed her lips with a conscious power,
The red rims sank like a bruised flower,
Her soul went out in a tearful shower—
 My lord, I wed to-day.

By Suns and Stars

THE WIND AND THE MAID

My lover is the wind. I know
Of none more saucy in mankind,
When, with his arrow and his bow,
He chases me the hay behind,
And, wheeling through the grasses low,
He smothers me with kisses blind.

If I ascend the ferny hill,
Where the grey wattle hugs the vine—
Though virtue rests upon my will,
And simple innocence is mine—
With easy touch he tempts me still
Across the merry border-line.

Down by the river, where the mint
Confers her fragrance on my feet,
And daisies in long furrows glint,
Like lanterns in a lively street,
He comes in ardour to imprint
Caresses sly and yet discreet.

The Wind and the Maid

The gay morn with her widened fan
Waves him against my window panes,
With becks and whispers sweeter than
The magpie's carol on the plains,
Or shepherd's songs to piping Pan,
Or nightingales in lovers' lanes.

When the cold curtain of the night
Drops softly on reclining day:
With trophy set, my worthy knight
Attacks the leagues of lonely way,
And when the darkness breeds affright
His whistling blade is turned to slay.

Not knight alone, but minstrel he,
With melodies for ev'ry mood,
With sparkling rhymes for chivalry,
And Lenten hymns for sober food,
And gusty chords of sympathy
To shake grey sorrow and her brood.

My lover is the wind, but, oh!
Some days his passion lamely halts,
And when I hear no echo low
Responding from the sapphire vaults
I pray the gods to me would blow
A son of Adam and his faults.

By Suns and Stars

THE KISS

HER face drooped near, and could I ban it?
Should I resist such bliss,
Or steal from lips of pomegranate
One little honeyed kiss?

What would you do, my doleful brother?
A second Joseph be?
Or do as I, and snatch another
Sweet taste of ecstasy?

And having felt the manhood in you
Take toll without dismay,
I ask you now, would you continue,
Or would you turn away?

The Supper Dance

THE SUPPER DANCE

ONE lone musician of the band
Is left to weave his dreamy airs,
As you and I together stand
Beside the line of vacant chairs.

The glitter and the pomp have gone,
And faded is the galaxy;
The tapers dimly flicker on
An empty floor and you and me.

We need no garish flame to light
The pathway of our dance divine;
The love-glow in your eyes to-night
Is beacon-ray for yours and mine.

A single chord rings through the hall
In passionate acclaim, and we,
Like shepherds tripping to a call,
Break into realms of fantasy.

By Suns and Stars

The banners rustle to their head,
The solemn palms are filled with elves,
And silently the walls outspread
Like mirrors mirrored in themselves.

No sombre wood receives our feet ;
We tread on ether flecked with gold
And in the music's rhythmic beat
The alphabet of love is told.

I see the curves about your breast,
With purple shadows in between,
Where covertly your secrets rest
Behind a laced and silken screen.

The perfume of your glowing hair
Has trickled from a violet's bell,
Or Daphne, swimming in the air,
Above the ranks of asphodel.

The hemlock juice and tainted bane
That spur the feelings of the East
Are lees and dregs of old champagne
Beside our sprightly-footed feast.

The world is ours by right of youth,
And kingdoms tremble as we turn ;
We are the lords of love and truth,
Before whose altars all things burn.

The Supper Dance

The voice of all the voices rings,
And Heav'n drops her solemn bars,
And we ascend on sweeping wings
Amidst a cataract of stars.

The jealous gods, enwrapt in ice,
Whose clouded eyes betray regret,
Must watch us waltz to Paradise,
Wherein our souls are dancing yet.

THE GAVOTTE

WE had been sated with the waltz,
The fickle polka held no joy ;
Quadrilles were frivolous and false,
And lancers an abandoned toy.

Then came to ear a rippling strain,
As though a hundred creeks were free,
With bubbling call and belled refrain,
To brew enchanted melody.

Some angel poured the liquid notes
In glasses thin as gossamer ;
We drank to him with eager throats,
And drained a shapely glass to her.

You saw Sir Galahad, and I
The prisoned lady of Shallot,
But there was rapture in her sigh
That night we chased our first gavotte.

The Gavotte

We left the set and ordered dance,
In room sedate and well arrayed,
And paced the borders of romance,
Where mortals as immortals played.

There was no time, there was no tide,
And naught but splendour of the morn ;
Maybe some one we knew had died,
Perchance another soul was born.

But with the tinkle of the strings
A magic mirror cleared our minds,
And on the play of common things
We drew the close and shuttered blinds.

Where Egypt's strident trumpets blared
In honour of the fruitful Nile,
And curling flames on altars flared,
We paused awhile and danced awhile.

Then Greece unrolled her monuments,
As some grey-haired and feeble nun,
With modest pride, her ornaments
Lays humbly to the gentle sun.

And Rome that once with state was filled
By feasting hall and pompous street—
She who was curved and seven-hilled—
Responded to our restless feet.

By Suns and Stars

There were thick verdures where the leaves
Assailed in raining tenderness,
And we became amidst the sheaves
A shepherd and a shepherdess.

Then where the tents of chivalry
Proud pennons hoisted to the sky,
We rode the lists, a knight and she
Whose beauty duelled ev'ry eye.

But always as the music bid,
And always as the ripple ran—
Now striking with the princely Cid,
And now again a simple man.

Yet as emotion shook the strings
Whose melody creates desire—
The subtle song the siren sings
By wreathing wave to empty lyre—

We knew that thief, old hangman Time,
Whose mission is to blur and blot,
Could not efface that night sublime,
That night we danced our first gavotte.

The Girl in Green

THE GIRL IN GREEN

THE world is full and fresh and fair,
And splendid are its ways;
But I, upon a cripple's chair,
Must loiter through the days.

The tides of mingled creed and class
That shape the human stream
Before my latticed arbour pass
Like phantoms in a dream.

As figures in a puppet show
They move on set affairs,
And oddly strange it is to know
My world is also theirs.

That one who limps in gait uncouth,
With cold and heavy phlegm,
May bear the lamp of endless youth,
Or Aristotle's gem.

By Suns and Stars

And she with mantle disarranged,
Who droops on catching feet,
Perchance with whitened angels played
Behind some sorry street.

And so they shuffle on the path
That God has drawn for each—
One moment silent in His wrath,
The next alive with speech.

I wondered what this foaming rush
Would drift and toss to me,
When the full tide in solemn hush
Broke for the stretching sea.

But as a current bends its course
To some magnetic call,
This wave of souls retrieved its source,
And passed my outer wall.

And when the ebb had died in froth
Beside the poplars lean,
Upon a square of verdant cloth
I saw a girl in green.

The gay day laid a diamond spray
Upon her amber hair,
Just where the curls in furrows lay
Like earth behind the share.

The Girl in Green

The flowers that homaged to the sun
Before his highest place,
In courtly turns of dances spun
To glow upon her face.

The curves she threw against the vines
With lissome bust and waist
Were wild, intoxicating lines
Upon a languid taste.

Those widened trees, whose pleasant leaves
Obscured the stinging heat,
Dropt fragments from rich summer sheaves
Around her turfy seat.

She drew a lazy glance upon
The mingled gold and green,
As idly as a floating swan
Surveys her mirrored sheen.

And then, as some out-staring tower
That proudly fronts the sea,
And winks the warning of the hour,
She turned her flame on me.

The gaze that slipt, with beam intense,
Across my bamboo screen,
Was neither vice nor innocence,
But something in between.

By Suns and Stars

If I could scoop the starry night
Of all its wealthy show,
And blend the blazes in one light
On shy Aurora's bow.

Then might I rival this clear flood
Of warm expectancy,
That fills the channels of the blood
With surging sympathy.

Such eyes as these, by grace of God,
And once in many years,
Call down upon the helpless clod
The thrilling dew of tears.

As one who, blinded at his birth,
By mercy is repaired,
And drinks the beauty of the earth,
So I with glory flared.

No archer who, with doubtful dart,
Draws at a hidden mark,
Was stronger strung than I whose heart
Gave back the raptured spark.

Maybe my vision was oblique,
And missed the girl in green,
For when I came again to seek,
Grey shadows filled the scene.

The Girl in Green

There was no colour in the view,
No sunshine trickled on
A phantasy of line and hue,
Because my girl was gone.

Again, with frothy fringe, the tide
Rolled backwards on its beat
Across the land where fancies ride,
And sealed my still retreat.

Yet as upon the turbid stream
A fallen petal boats,
So in and out and on my dream
The moss-hued maiden floats.

By Suns and Stars

“PAPA”

“PAPA! If all the earth were gold,
And all the clouds were pearl;
And diamonds leapt from each wave's tip
Where breakers roll and curl;
If all the bush were thick with gems
That dropt from every tree;
If silver fell instead of snow—
What would you buy for me?”

“My messengers, to every star,
Would fly on lightning wings,
And search their spheres from pole to pole
To find you wondrous things;
The treasures of the sun and moon,
The splendour of the skies,
Would 'twixt the morn and eventide
Be laid before your eyes.”

“Papa! If you had all the power
That moves the world around;
That lifts the stars from eastern hills
Like silver lights unwound;

“*Papa*”

That sucks the tide from shore to shore,
That rocks the Winter sea;
That shapes the winds from lifeless air—
What would you do for me?”

“The morn would always be the morn,
And Spring would never die;
And Youth would burn its rosy light
For ever in your eye;
And I would set you on a throne
Where land and water meet,
And thread a nation on a string
To wait about your feet.”

“Papa! If you had all the love
That babies at their birth
Bring in their hearts from Angel-land,
And loosen on the earth;
And all the love the birds pour in
Their nesting melody;
And all the love of mother-things—
How much would you give me?”

“From mountain top to lowly plain,
From desert to the sea,
All human hearts would ope their valves
And yield their love to me;

By Suns and Stars

My spies would sift the ends of earth
To gather every scrap ;
And I would roll it in a ball
And toss it in your lap."

The Midnight Train

THE MIDNIGHT TRAIN

THE midnight train runs upwards, far
 Beyond the spangled veil
That night throws on the weary earth
 To hide the sun's red trail.
She swings away on noiseless wheels,
 And in the nightly climb
Defies the fearful realm of space
 And mocks the range of time.

The driver is my double, and
 His motive cling to mine,
And if I wave a finger-tip
 He changes our design.
And should I faint at dizzy heights,
 Or shrink from awful falls,
His hand, with gentle providence,
 The wayward train recalls.

I take my seat, and in a flick
 New countries come to view,
With purple-woven mountain tops
 And valleys shot with dew,

By Suns and Stars

And rivers sparkling like a gem
That traps the morning rays,
And heavy forests where the leaves
Have scattered sandalled ways.

The people of this pleasant land
My willing subjects are,
And, when I touch its rim, throng in
A stream about my car.
Then vying in good rivalry,
Each on my will attends,
And reaps the joy that service yields
To those who wait on friends.

And would they have a pageantry
To feast their eyes upon,
I roll Time's screen aside, and show
The pomp of Babylon.
Or from the misty past revive
The grandeur of the Nile,
Or animate the portals of
A Roman peristyle.

Yet all this power would count as puff,
Were Love without a place,
The sky would wear a widow's weeds,
The sun be in disgrace.

The Midnight Train

The laughter of the careless wind
 Would wilter to a sigh—
If Love abjured her royalty
 The very flowers would die.

So lest the land be desolate,
 The living lose its zest,
We build a throne of human hearts
 And set Love on its crest.
And though as king I rule the folk
 By virtue of my might,
She sways their minds, like needles, with
 The magnet of delight.

With dawning day the train descends
 To earth's incessant care,
But happily my nostrils hold
 The perfume of Love's hair,
And, like the fumes of thickened wine,
 It lingers on the brain,
And lulls the passing hours until
 The train runs out again.

By Suns and Stars

THE SHEARING

THE sheep are leaping the purple rocks
Like a cascade's tawny flow ;
They drop in foam to the gath'ring flocks
That flood the hurdles below.
The tinted dews that the morn has shed
To their tufted cassocks cling,
As soft as down on a thistle-head,
Or spray on a sea-bird's wing.

They come with their golden girdles set
For the market and the price.
A season's grass is the chargèd debt,
And their coats the sacrifice.
And they must pay in their public lot
For the toil of patient years—
For pastures kept and a brushy cot—
To the rhyme of clinking shears.

The simple wood of the altar-piece,
By the countless off'rings worn,
Is choked with combs of the yellow fleece,
And the twisted trimmings torn.

The Shearing

And there they pray through the ruthless day
By the sanguined grate and bar,
With bitter bleat or a lonely lay,
And the incense of the tar.

And ships sail out on a shifty trail
With a yield that clogs their hold,
With bonded script and the banded bale,
Like the argonauts of old.
The whirling wheels of the tireless looms
And the spindle and the rack,
Will blend new colours for fashion's blooms,
While the shriven sheep go back.

By Suns and Stars

THE SONG OF THE SAW

To rippling hills, where the shadows break
Through twisted bough and leaf,
I come in the arms of the timber rake,
As landlord to his feoff.
The dusky boles and the crusted spires
That mount to airy heights
Are sweetened food for my turning tyres
And grist for running bites.

Where forests sleep through the monthless years,
And time is tied to days,
I come with a set of shafted spears
To stir the ancient ways.
The grey gums groan as my cutter rings
By sister trees and friends;
The cinctured trunk at my summons swings,
And lofty plumage bends.

I am the lord of the cumbered ground
Where Nature works awry;
Where she has builded a forest sound
I clear for wheat and rye.

The Song of the Saw

The clustered rush of the underbrush
On fertile soil and fair,
I cleave in twain to a moaning rush,
And sighs of dead despair.

Through bitten channels the white sap runs
In floods of sympathy,
But tearful cries to the kindly suns
Are fruitless litany.
My dragon teeth, by the will of man,
Must wheel and rip and tear,
So there be space and an open plan
For shining mould and share.

My bonded brother his length must fling
Through rod and rod of earth,
But he main bide on an easy swing
Till I redeem his dearth ;
For I must flatten the soaring pile
And clip the hill's green brow
Ere there be room on a treasured mile
To turn the willing plough.

The pillared domes of the jarrah kings,
And states where karri reigns,
Are less avail than the mushroom rings
That fairies weave for chains,

By Suns and Stars

When my toothed lip is bent to the wood,
And strength is borne to dust—
Yet this my song is the song of good,
And things that claim me just.

The cobwebbed threads of the railway god
That span a continent
Must lay their way through the levelled sod
On carven blocks I sent;
And ships that lift to the east and west
Through sprayed and stormy miles,
With shaken sides and a battered breast,
Find harbour by my piles.

My nimble blade to a log is laid
For swift and sure caress,
And I will fashion and carve and braid
The wood to tasty dress;
And from my benches the planking rides
In ordered suit and gait,
To rise in tiers on the ranking sides
Of homes that make a State.

I am the lord of the untouched wild,
Of newly-wakened lands,
Where there, for strength, as a newborn child,
The human stock expands.

The Song of the Saw

Yet I am held for a people's weal
In just restraint and law,
And so to the tune of governed steel
I sing the song of the saw.

By Suns and Stars

THE LIBEL

ONE summer morning, as the hours
Were soothed to simple idleness,
I lay amongst the pensive flowers,
And answered to their soft caress.

With tint and shade they gave their hues
To shed repose upon my eyes.
In painted lanes and avenues
I saw their billowed splendour rise.

The East may blend her blooded gems
In pompous shape and high design,
And yet upon these waving stems
Behold some fairer jewels shine.

One who was waxen in his ears,
Whose nostrils caught no ready scent,
Had wandered through in bygone years
And spread opinion as he went.

The Libel

The odours that around assailed
The senses to delicious state,
For him no pleasant nosegay hailed,
No woodbine climbing by a gate.

Australia's flowers were stark and stern,
Their colours ran without a heart.
I wonder if he smelt the fern
When she uncoiled her plumaged art.

The incense of the wattle boughs
Dropt heavily on grass and leaf,
And yet he walked with threaded brows,
Whose porting nose brought no relief.

Perhaps the flavour of the gum,
That pushed abroad her honeyed spray,
By magic wrought his senses dumb
Until he woke and went away.

By Suns and Stars

THE SONG OF THE FIRST PARADE

FIVE score, all told, of Australian breed,
We stand in a nervous row ;
Some have the strain of an English sire,
Some are crossed with an Arab's fire,
Some are brumbies, with no desire
Save the tread of a canter slow,
And a groping nose in the evening feed.

But, common or gentle, all are one
When we face the Maxim's voice ;
The pellets that rattle about the ranks
Have no particular choice.
A bullet will cripple a thoroughbred
As soon as the sorriest moke,
And the claims of exclusive birth are lost
In the riotous battle smoke.

Our hearts are beating at double rate,
And swelling our throbbing veins ;
Our muscles ripple from head to heel
Like heat-waves running through tempered steel—
Our necks are tossed in a short appeal
For a loosened curb and reins,
And a challenge to carry our weight.

The Song of the First Parade

The blood of a brother calls our blood
From the distant battle plain ;
And shall we wait at the outer gate
Till the signal rings again ?
Though the Horse of Death, with the fire-lit eyes,
Should hover about our track,
When the summons comes from our stricken kin
Shall we of the breed hang back ?

We have cropped our toll of the winter grass
In the thick of the underbrush ;
We have galloped out at the break of day
In circling lines, like the foals at play ;
We have dozed awhile when the paddocks lay
Asleep in the noonday hush,
And the sky was as polished brass.

But the word has come from across the sea,
Our work is near at hand ;
And we must fight as our fathers fought,
By the token of our brand. !
And we must cover the reddened plain,
And creep through dusty kloofs,
Where some at the close of a fighting day
May lie with upturned hoofs.

Our feet are tuned to the daily drill,
And our ears to the bugle calls ;

By Suns and Stars

We have trampled grooves in the shifting sand
As we stood in wait on the bit's demand—
And now we are ready to prove our brand,
 In the face of buttressed walls,
Though our fortune be good or be ill.

Our girths are taut and our cruppers slack,
 Our stirrups hang to swing;
We pick our steps with a steady gait
 To the bit's melodious ring.
We must sail away on a nearing day
 With a score of ten times ten,
And who can level a taunt at us,
 When we carry a hundred men?

Mafeking

MAFEKING

No ramparts screened thy market-place from shot;
No battlements defied the shrieking shell
That split the air with thunder as it fell;
No grim redoubt winked lightning through a slot;
No masonry, close laid with secret trowel,
Showed stern, unbending features to the foes;
What held thee safe amidst incessant blows?
A line of sturdy men—and Baden Powell.

THE WHITE BATS

WHERE the grey-lipped ranges mouth the sky,
A dozen miles from the sea,
And the red-veined rocks are shoulder high
In a tide of greenery ;
Five score or more of the white-winged bats
Were filed like an ordered host,
With their singing strings and slanting slats,
On the New Man's circling coast.

A word was passed through the trembling air,
On the lightning's fevered flight,
Of shoals of sharks from a distant lair
To harry the New Man's bight ;
And a bat awoke from oily sleep
To the buzzing engine's hum,
To tightened stays and a lofty leap,
And a thousand feet of plumb.

A wash of cloud on a blackened streak
Grew clear on the purple line,
And an untoothed gape beneath the reek
Spoke once of a swift design.

The White Bats

The bat recoiled on his pinioned way
For a longing look and wide,
While a prayer slipped up through opened day
To God, from the man inside.

As an eagle takes the downward dip
To the quarry's shifting bait,
The white bat dropped to the foremost ship,
With a bridled bomb as freight.
The grey shark shivered from tower to keel
As she haunched upon her race,
While a man spake low beside a wheel,
And the shark was cleared for space.

The deadly tubes to their ranges swung,
With an eye unblinked and fast;
They tracked the bat as he lightly hung
Ashake for a finished cast.
Then they roared aloud in ruddy rage
Through a clouded smoke and flame,
And a man went down in a crumpled cage,
But he left a hero's name.

The ranges stirred like a field of down,
And the bats came out by threes;
What consequence that a twain should drown,
So the third sang victories?

By Suns and Stars

And there was skill and a cunning flight
To sport with the spitting shot—
Our fathers stormed in a sterner fight
For a prize of lesser lot.

So three went round on a swooping raid
Where the furnace scattered sparks,
And three more ran to a higher grade
On the line of angry sharks.
Then one was winged, and his tilted planes
Were the playthings of the sky,
To flap and flutter the airy lanes,
While the smoke-wreaths drifted by.

And one dissolved like a fading flower
When the breath of summer passed,
As the grey shark spread a leaden shower
Aloft on a crimson blast.
But the third he laughed to scorn all doubt,
As he slipped his cunning shell,
And a steel colossus splintered out
In the instant throes of hell.

There have been fights, and there fights will be,
When the passions rise to foam,
For a free man's right to liberty,
And the priceless peace of home.

The White Bats

But the New Man's coast, so long serene,
Was flushed to its furthest tips
When the threefold bats, with honour clean,
Bore down on the pirate ships.

Three pairs of wings to a bulge of steel,
Three men to the host below,
But the Lord who steadied the New Man's keel,
On the corsair laid his bow ;
And we, who waited with bated breath,
Sang the lays of ancient Rome,
As the last lean shark was done to death,
And the last white bat flew home.

By Suns and Stars

THE WHITE ARMADA

THE stars shone out at the fore-head, the stripes were
flung behind,
And over the clinging waters floated an equal mind.
Blood of the blood that ventured where new-found lands
lay bare
Brings to a distant brother the rights of a brother's
share.
Guard of the long Pacific, from wave-wrung shore to
shore,
Stand not here on the threshold—we tender the open
door.

Our father's swords have measured, our father's blood
has run,
That we might meet in kinship beneath a friendly
sun.
They wrought their dreams of freedom on lonely brush
and plain,
And by our lighted haven we hold their strife a gain.
The years have brought endeavour, the ties have closed
to hand ;
And, bound by crimson cincture, the Great White people
stand.

The White Armada

The hearths that warmed your cradle are hearths that
saw our birth ;
Their fires are newly kindled from end to end of
earth ;
And where their flames leap skyward, or where their
ashes glow,
Along the reeking tropics, or 'neath incessant snow,
They hold for warmth of welcome away from view or
creed—
To join in jubilation, or serve a waiting need.

Yet took we pledge for living, yet took we power on
lease,
That by our ancient landmarks we forge the keys of
peace.
Where tumult shook a nation, and justice turned
aside,
The vows we owned in simple were vows for which we
died.
For righteousness and honour, on us the Master's
will ;
And wherefore met in danger we keep the promise
still.

Now, as we greet each other, on the White Man's
southern rim,
Unbind the gear of travel and loose the girded
limb.

By Suns and Stars

Abide in our tents a little, while heart speaks out to
heart,
To sweeten the swelling distance that tears our ways
apart.
Eat and drink and be merry till the old-time signal,
when
The fluttering bunting whispers, "God speed till we
meet again."

The Titanic

THE TITANIC

ARREST thy bold, usurping hand, oh, man !
Curb the high fervour and ambitious plan ;
For it is written in the sacred lore,
Thus far thy suit shall venture and no more.
Not all the majesty of bulwarked steel
That rides so proudly on the thrusting keel,
And calmly bends the heaving wash to spray—
Not this magnificence and pomp shall stay
By one limp hair the mode of destiny.
The fate which sends to-day a careless sea,
In motion easy, with becoming wave,
To-morrow in red anger plots a grave ;
And all the beaconed ways of human thought
With sobs and sighs to nothingness are brought ;
They who had played in dreams where conquest led
Now call upon the ocean for their dead.

In the old ages which are rot and rust
Men builded pyramids against the dust,
This newer season breeds a floating pile
That dwarfs the solemn grandeur of the Nile ;
And yet this triumph, this expanded show,
Sinks with ripped shoulders by a sleeping foe.

By Suns and Stars

Not all the cultivated art and craft
Could make her surer than a simple raft,
In that black moment when the gilded world
Against the cracking elements was hurled.
What was the bulky enterprise, the pride
Of rich achievements, when two thousand died?
Two thousand souls that entered on their death
In the slow passing of an infant's breath!
The scornful sea tots these upon her roll,
And bleeds the nation that has claimed control.

Sis McCann

SIS McCANN

HERE will I write you a story—
The story of Sis McCann,
Who, wreathed in a woman's glory,
Wanted to capture a man.

Sis with her five-eleven,
Sturdy of shoulders and hips—
The taste of a seventh heaven
Lay in her dewy lips.

And her eyes shone out in laughter,
Like twinkling stars in mist,
As she beckoned the suitors after
With a turn of her rounded wrist.

Her smile was a thing of wonder,
Suffusing, like dawn, her face,
When the light beats up from under
And hallows the sky with grace.

By Suns and Stars

Born to the skirt and saddle,
She rode like a gay hussar ;
The gallant who came astraddle
Followed her shoe-lights afar.

Sis was no gossamer fairy,
Swathed in a moonlit sheen ;
She ran the sty and the dairy
Like a double-coupled machine.

And the fashion she ruled the cattle
Drew boasts from old McCann ;
He swore by the gods of battle
That Sis gave points to a man.

When the burnished pails were rippling
With the milk-yard's fleecy flow,
The oldest hand and the stripling
To the skill of Sis bent low.

And the lovers who leant on fences,
Where shade was a change unique,
Drew breath at the consequences
Of ruffling her downy cheek.

The hearts that burnt like tinder
To win a delinquent kiss
Were charred to a lifeless cinder
Before the glance of Sis.

Sis McCann

Big Jim Moore, the drover,
 Ventured a word, and fled ;
While handsome Harry, the rover,
 The ringer of every shed,

Whose challenge rang in the dawning
 Like the crow of chanticleer,
Shrank, like a mastiff fawning
 At the feet of a lord severe.

And the colts, as yet unbroken,
 Who followed their heroes' lead,
Sat with the word unspoken,
 Shamed at the undone deed.

Then into the bashful meeting,
 Minted fresh from town,
Came with a gusty greeting
 Cyril Montgomery Brown.

We all had a sense of loathing
 For this gilded city sprat,
With his mathematical clothing,
 And his unromantic hat.

We knew the way of the bush-land,
 By night or day to ride,
But he broke us out with his push-land
 Manner of snaring a bride.

By Suns and Stars

While we of the wool and horsehair
 Stood awed before the prize,
He came like an old-time corsair
 And took her before our eyes.

Now the boys are bereft of senses,
 And broken in divers parts,
And the rails of McCann's old fences
 Are strung with shattered hearts.

And the milk in the dairy curdles
 At the thought of Sis McCann,
Who topped with a cheer the hurdles,
 Caught by a city man.

But I am alone in pursuing
 A grim philosophy,
For Sis in her strenuous wooing
 Never cast eyes at me.

The Spinners

THE SPINNERS

THERE was a barque set sail one day,
By hungry gulf and grinning bay,
To seek an island far away,
Where dwelt the spirit of content.
Gay rovers these who swung the ropes
Adown the masthead's dizzy slopes,
And filled were they with faiths and hopes
That set the gods in wonderment.

Somewhere across the blue-robed sea,
Where wind and wave leagued sympathy,
Beneath an aged and wondrous tree,
Their island lay upon the charts.
So steered they north and steered they south
And steered they east, until a drouth
That cracked the motions of the mouth
Laid heavy burden on their hearts.

Then "hi," they said, and "ho," they said,
And jibed against the western red—
"What is content if we are dead?"
And swung the mighty tiller round.

By Suns and Stars

In fruitless winds and aimless seas,
In shifty joints and quaking knees,
In spectre rocks and ghostly quays,
Content was lost to sight and sound.

Then four points north and four points west
They laid their keel across the breast
Of one confiding wave, whose crest,
With foamy promise, bade them on.
They ran by headlands where the night
Is blistered with excited light
To stretches on a long-drawn bight,
But there content had breathed and gone.

Then one read from an ancient rune
Of flaky pathways of the moon
That beckoned to a still lagoon,
Whose brow was fanned by preening palms.
So on the tropic's languid line,
Where newborn days are drowsed in wine,
Their bowsprit headed for the sign
Until it droned beneath the calms.

And now the sea was slack and spent,
All listless were the stays they bent,
And in a haze their sweet content
Diffused her life and lost her soul.

The Spinners

Then whistled they by stem and stern
For chancy winds from Indra's urn,
One zephyr lost, with whose return
Their ship might join in eager roll.

The surly fates who wield the flail
On stubborn heart or spirit frail,
In cynic humour blew a gale
That rent the canvas into shreds;
And they were left with barren poles
To pierce the pathway of the shoals,
While Neptune rough exacted tolls,
And laid hard bargains on their heads.

But patience watched behind her cuff;
She laid her smooth hand on the rough,
And ere the fates had cried enough
The waves were beacons with a buoy.
And as the broken clouds' grey bank
In tumbled pieces slowly sank,
They filled their flagons and they drank
To eke the measure of their joy.

Then followed they a grimy track
Behind a mammoth steamships wrack—
One thousand leagues to there and back—
And pressed upon a city's hives.

By Suns and Stars

There lines were laid, and ways were made,
And things were said that men obeyed,
And God was trusted with a trade,
 But poor content was barred their lives.

They laid the city by their heel,
And slunk away on trembling keel,
While dolphins in excessive zeal
 Ploughed snowy furrows as a guide.
Then northwards with the albatross,
Whose easy pinions swing across
The sloping seas, or pitch and toss,
 They wrestled with a heaving tide ;

And drifted on by flinty flocs
Whose caps are crowned with crimson snows
That shed their colours, as the rose
 Drops petals, to the dying sun ;
Till in the icy kingdom vast
Some careless demon loosed a blast,
And they were left with splintered mast
 To make the aching homeward run.

And so these rovers, once so gay,
Crept silently through sunsets grey,
By naked gulf and empty bay,
 On listless seas devoid of foam ;

The Spinners

Yet as one losing in a race
Trims his demeanour with good grace,
So firmness settled on their face,
And sturdy eyes looked out to home.

With ribboned sheets and trysail torn,
And tattered tops and stays forlorn,
Well might they wait the shower of scorn
That greets the beaten and the sore ;
But as when souls are lowest down
They higher spring to reach the crown—
This be their trophy and renown,
Content was hailing from the shore.

By Suns and Stars

RECIPE

TAKE a soul of childhood,
Verdant in the bloom,
Loose it on its wildhood,
Innocent of doom.

Paint its wings with pleasure,
Colour all its days,
Yield it fullest measure,
Widen all its ways.

Break the spiny bramble,
Cull the glowing flowers,
Scatter for a scramble
Contumacious hours.

Let the franchised bubble
Shed its gaudy hues,
While the ghost of trouble
Lags in cloggèd shoes.

Recipe

In the giddy dances,
 Courting passion shy,
Pour inviting glances
 From a liquid eye.

Rear a fairy palace,
 Streaked with living lines,
Crown it with a chalice
 For ambrosial wines.

Let the pageant splendid
 Crimson more and more,
Till the dream is ended,
 And the soul is sore.

Then with salt of sorrow,
 Bittered nine times nine,
On a bleak to-morrow,
 Steep the soul in brine.

With a pungent acid,
 Biting like a flash,
Paint the fibres placid
 Till they waste in ash.

Where the flame impinges
 On the ruddy steel,
Lay the dainty fringes
 Till the bones reveal.

By Suns and Stars

Pass the shaking tissue
Through a pointed rack,
Let the bleeding issue
Welter in a sack.

Lest the soul should languish
Under terror's strain,
Turn the cup of anguish
Swiftly on the drain.

Sift the broken pieces
Through a slender mesh,
Work alone releases
Sp'rit from the flesh.

After washings seven,
If you find a trace,
To the Lord of Heaven
Offer it with grace.

Sea-Fingers

SEA-FINGERS

WAVING sea-fingers, encircled with foam,
What do you gather to-day in your comb?

Where have you probed in the deep, in the deep,
Mattressed with ooze for eternity's sleep?

Say, have you shaken the withering bones
Down in the pools of the nethermost zones?

What do you bring from the limpid lagoon,
Pearl-shine and shimmer that dropt from the moon?

Where is the chaplet you stole from the snows,
Crusted and clinging to fugitive floes?

Where are the banners you bore on your breast,
Blithely to battle the winds of the west?

What is your purpose, oh, magical sea,
Will you not render your riddle to me?

By Suns and Stars

Stay in your answer, for this I have seen,
You are but children, as children have been.

Weaving a garland of feathery froth,
Boiling a cauldron of slippery broth.

Stirring and straining the sun-bitten rocks,
Chafing the slumbering wood of the docks.

Shaping and making with tremulous hands
Cities and castles in quivering sands.

Twisting the seaweed in bibulous rolls,
Whetting the jaws of the treacherous shoals.

Herdng the timorous shells on the beach,
Lowing and cooling in purposeless speech.'

Tossing the rivetted monsters of steel,
Groaning and shaking from transome to keel.

Petulant, tearing the weary old earth,
Generous, weaving a nest for re-birth.

Teasing to anger the riotous blast,
Laughing its passion to scorn as it passed.

Tempting with promise the weathering clouds,
Creeping, like monks, in voluminous shrouds.

Sea-Fingers

Daring the sun and its opulent heat,
Soothing the night with your rythmical beat.

Waving sea-fingers, illumined with spray,
Who shall decide on your mission to-day

By Suns and Stars

A SLIP

AN angel watching the depths of Hell,
Dropt a tear for the lost and lone;
The devil winked as the tear-drop fell,
And the tear was turned to stone.

But the Lord God guarded the stricken gem,
As it slipped through the fiery whirl,
And ere it had touched the earth's blue hem
He had changed it into a pearl.

The Lake of Tears

THE LAKE OF TEARS

ON a blackened isle in a lightless sea
Lies the lake of woman's tears,
And fringed it is with a salty froth,
And the broken heads of Ashtaroth ;
And the air is charged with fears
That creep like ghosts on the sightless sea.

By the further shore, where the stabbing stones
Lay threats on the moaning wave,
The winds have bitten the hapless rocks,
And sculpt and scuttled the drowsy blocks
To a great and hollow cave,
Where the witches are and the gabbling crones.

By day or night, with a frightened splash,
The tears of the world run down ;
They furrow and fret the ancient wall,
And drop and drip to a feeble fall,
Like the lives that weakly drown,
And their trail is set with a whitened ash.

By Suns and Stars

The strings and reeds of the leafy choir
That mellow the ways of earth
Are barren here and are hushed and low,
While minor keys sing a note of woe,
Like cries of a child at birth,
Or a childish wail for a brief desire.

The devil he looses a nameless wind
If a star-head comes to light;
The deathly reek of his pitchy pit,
Where the sulphur writhes in seething spit,
On the pale flame lays a blight,
And the blazes sway like the aimless blind.

On the thickened bed of the smoking gloom
The child of the world is born;
And tears of a mother's anguish drain
As the softened shower of filtered rain
When a cloud's white breast is torn—
And a man is staked for the choking tomb.

Not a soul is sped on its curving bent
To grow and fatten and fall,
But the string is loosed to woman's sobs,
And the shaft is spurred by woman's throbs,
While the distance takes her call,
And the prayers and the hopes she, serving, sent.

The Lake of Tears

To a man it comes in the ache of years
With the numbing shock of truth,
That never a thought or word of good
But drew its birth from the womanhood,
That helmed the vessel of youth
On the lonely lake of a woman's tears.

By Suns and Stars

CHRISTMAS

THE jewelled sun of summer blazes high ;
The loyal earth yields incense to his rays ;
And in the tread of the abundant days
Old Christmas comes, to chide the furtive sigh.
No timid visitant is he, nor shy,
But heralded in lusty songs of praise ;
And mirth and gladness line his many ways,
And chase the shades of care from ev'ry eye.

Be of good cheer ; the terms ye spent in grief
Are fallen like the worn and withered leaf.
Old stems re-bud beneath a kindly sun,
And with the blessed dews dry courses run.
Let bitternesses die ; clip Mem'ry's wings,
And look to radiant Hope for brighter things.

The Old King

THE OLD KING

MIDST doubts and fears, and after Fate's delays,
He wore the Crown of Empire in our lands,
And took the burden that the Crown demands,
Though ruthless Time had multiplied his days.
To stand his people's counsellor; their ways
To shape; to hold their love in silken bands
Alone: with this high office in his hands
He strove, and left it with a nation's praise.

Through troubled seas he held the helm of State,
Serene, and conscious of the course to steer,
Until the Master bade the journey cease,
And called the pilot to the inner gate.
With reverence we lay upon his bier
That which he bore in life, the wreath of peace.

By Suns and Stars

SEDDON

For him are done the days of light,
The sunlit glow of mortal life,
And in the darkness of the night
He rests, a hero, after strife.

He wore no chaplet on his brow,
Nor tinsel cut to measures vain—
His crest, maybe, the humble plough,
His shield the cultivated plain.

No party mind was his; all men
Were brethren in the sight of God;
No fashion came within his ken
To mark the courtier from the clod.

Forewarned, he saw the future rise,
With toleration in the van;
And, with prescience in his eyes,
He mapped his wide and broad'ning plan.

Seddon

Nor stayed he in the narrow ways
That chain the soul to single lines ;
His vision sought the nobler phase
Of wise Imperial designs :

That kindred might be kindred still,
With league and league of wave between ;
And in their brotherhood fulfil
The promise of the days serene.

Too soon ambition's gate has closed,
While yet was work for sturdy hearts ;
The captain's voyage, self-imposed,
Must be maintained on other charts.

Some other back must hold the cross,
And bear it through the troubled years ;
So as New Zealand mourns her loss,
Inclined Australia blends her tears.

By Suns and Stars

THE STAR

THE first-born night, in mourning gloom arrayed,
Slipt from the portals of her dead lord's gate,
While he, cloud-curtained, in the west was laid
By shudd'ring breezes to his last estate.
The spirit drew her softly to the throne,
As wide her clinging draperies were spread,
And sate her, hushed in sorrow and alone,
With melancholy moons about her head.
The wistful stars, in clustered sympathy,
With twinkling emblems lit the darkened way,
And crooned a song of other days to be,
And promise, breaking from the lifeless grey.
Forth from the host she plucked one shining light,
Poised for a moment to the earth's dim slope,
As one who marks a missile's certain flight,
Then kindly kissed and loosed the star of hope.

In crumbled time this was the star
That glowed on Bethlehem,
When Magi, from Chaldea far,
Brought myrrh and spice and gem.

The Star

It blazed upon the crimson page
Of grim Crusader's quests,
And lit with chivalry the rage
Of their impassioned breasts.

Upon the furthest western sky
In faintest haze it shone,
A beacon to the anxious eye,
And drew Columbus on.

The pale poles caught its cheerful glance
Amidst their thickened snows,
And, warmed with flush of new romance,
Foreswore their cold repose.

The eyeless deserts felt its gleam,
And held their choking sighs:
Beneath its radiance their dream
In fruit would surely rise.

Where thrusting pennants pierced the hush
Of nature's nursery,
The star, upon the lonely brush,
Laid wondrous filagree.

And silent men who drove the share
By lease of Adam's curse,
Renewed their faith, with pluck to spare,
When seasons were averse.

By Suns and Stars

Though doubt may prick the feet of zeal,
Like briar's on the way,
And fate may tap the shieldless heel,
The star still burns to-day.

The Goddess

THE GODDESS

You came, my love, upon the luring morn,
When the soft grass was bearded with gay fire,
When richest melodies and songs were born,
To flame the rapture of sublime desire.
Pale as a penitent before the stool,
I waited meekly for your kindly grace,
As the secluded and becoming pool,
Expectant lies before the sun's embrace.
But in the crowded torrent of high praise
My lowly off'rings only lived to die.
You rode, triumphant, on the thronging days,
And in the clamour rudely passed me by.

We met again within a shifting street,
Where the vain gods of fashion soured the heart,
And envy bred the critics and their meat.
I thought you then, majestic and apart,
Would surely break the cordage of display,
Slice the false tinsel, shred the clotted tape,
Stoop with demeanour from your lofty way,
And clothe your wonder in a kindly shape.

By Suns and Stars

But as a shiv'ring bubble blindly snaps
Beneath the weight of glories laid upon,
So broke my golden vision in mishaps,
And while I bowed in sorrow you were gone.

Once more I saw you where the breasted
ships

Slide up and down upon the ocean's curls,
When Venus gave you carmine shells for lips,
And shone your body with her lustrous pearls.
The shimmer of the wave was in your eyes,
And dainty saltiness lay on your hair,
As if all nature in glad enterprise
Had sought to perfect you beyond compare.
But, as I beckoned, mournful mists arose,
And a bleak fog blew over all my view ;
The vapours curdled and the picture froze,
And all the rolling world was closed on you.

Yet this I have against the hand of death
When he, inopportune, arrives to slay,
By compress of the heart and clogging breath,
That when I venture on his crumbled clay,
Where the thrown shell is heaped beside the
pit ;

There in the centre of the thing unknown,
Whose habitation is by lamp unlit,
Your presence in the veiled and shrouded throne,

The Goddess

To the wild hymn of cymbal and of drum,
Will purge the misery of frantic years,
Render a pathway to the light, and come
As tenderly as music on vexed ears.

By Suns and Stars

THE CONQUEROR

Now is he strengthened by the Lord's good will,
With lucid plan, and service to fulfil.
Clear as a landscape set in crystal air
He saw the burden of all living and his share.
The pedalled ways that dusty feet had worn
Before the glances of audacious scorn
Were thickened with moist greenness, by which aid
His steps were tempered and his progress made.
Where sick and troubled clouds disturbed the sky
Sweet stretches of soft azure found the eye.
Men who had bulked at him before the test
Shrank to the level of his filling chest.
The fears that fancy drew upon the screen
In the impatient hours that forked between
The horror and the ardour of his days
Dissolved like snow before a crimson blaze.
The laggard and weak-jointed steps of doubt
With high commission sought new places out,
By widened plateaux, where the reckless east
On sky and water flung a rainbow feast,
Or sandy slopes, that caught the ocean's tears,
As the keen sickle takes the golden ears :
These were his kingdoms, carpeted and clean,
And by his valiant self he reigned serene.

The Conqueror

So this old miracle was wrought afresh
On tampered spirit and unhonoured flesh ;
He who had knelt to circumstance and prayed,
When the palm-wreath upon the sword was laid ;
Who in the whirlwind of the Furies' rage,
With blanching marrow, threw aside his gage ;
Unloosed the strings that held him in his place,
And watched his thin endeavour slip in space ;
Misread the trumpet charge for the retreat,
Or like the weakling, who, on feeble feet,
To move his shallow functions to their use,
Prides the pale purpose with a pleasant juice,
Broke into fruitless clamour, till the sigh
Of some despairing portent sapped his eye ;
He who had tottered, selfless, limp, and sore,
While God's divinity lay in his core—
That subtle ravelling of cell and bone—
In the supremest hour came to his own ;
Came with the stealthy vigil of the night
In lengthened hours that droop before the light ;
And as the dawn her amber flame uncurled
Shook a fierce negative against the world,
Rebuilt the broken pieces of his whole,
Fought with the universe and won his soul.

By Suns and Stars

HIS RIGHT

To march with bosom forward to the wind,
To shout the exaltation of his mind ;
Attempt the pinnacle where new airs blow
Their thrilling vapour from unsullied snow ;
Drink with the dews and roister in the rains ;
Hail the warm dawning with unsheltered brains ;
Lie with loose limb beneath the languid wave
That filtered with slow pulse from Heaven's nave
Play with the stars, as children on the sands
With shining stones in lines create new lands,
Or droop with shaken muscles as the night
Draws in her velvet strings—this was his right.

There was no interdict on public place—
Who ventured boldly stared in fortune's face—
And merit in fresh circumstances drew
The inspiration for a plunge anew.
Where clustered toil in energy was bent,
From that strained bow his shooting arrow went.
The fruitful plough that laves the earth with grain
With ev'ry fattened furrow was his gain.

His Right

All ways were free that to advancement led,
The line was clear from capitol to shed ;
All that earth succoured in her swollen breast
Was his rich baggage on the lively quest.

Yet with restraint, for sober was his suit—
The pruned tree ripens with the richest fruit.
All action that expanded thought dictates
Must pass the icy judgment of the fates.
He who would sit on stately seat and rule,
By obligation faces first the school.
With this reserve his effort swam on wings
Along the widened plane of greater things.
On curving tiers he took his happy rise,
And each ascension gave him clearer eyes
And rounder outlook and decision swift—
This and much more was our Australia's gift.

By Suns and Stars

THE ROSE

OLD Adam, dying in the ev'ning sun,
Prayed for a rose: an angel brought him one,
And as upon his nostrils fell its spice—
The ling'ring essence of lost Paradise—
A sun-shower of quick tears bedewed his eyes,
The calloused scales of barren enterprise
Sloughed from his hands; the sore and stricken
 joint
With wondrous healing unguent was anoint;
A sanguine current rang his languid thews
To sturdy action, as the balmy dews
Make deserts strive with nature for re-birth,
And in that struggle animate the earth.

Time-burdened though his eyes were, he could
 see
This was the gift, the flower of sympathy;
The salvaged hope of heaven, from whose store
Keen justice banned his kind for evermore;
A budding clue, with which he might essay
The passage of the labyrinthine way,

The Rose

And from this sorry desolation save
His stock for that sweet garden's scented pave
Where once he trod with shoulders to the sun,
When comely hope her scarlet message spun
Unto the waiting life, and bade him rule
All moving things from mountain-top to pool.

Now, waiting for the thrilling hour of doom
That ruptures all the secrets of the tomb;
With flesh inert and muscles steeped in peace,
Before the awful travail of release,
Yet burnished in his mind, he saw aright
The friendly signs, as beacons in the night.
The Sphynx's frozen lips with words were thrilled,
The Oracle's dumb cave with song was filled,
The depths, responsive, struck a mighty chord
Whose echoes bridged the Styx's darkened ford,
And unseen choirs in boundless harmony,
Proclaimed on earth the birth of sympathy.

Low in the west a slender crescent lay
To mark the passing of this direful day,
But on the tips, in widened circle flung,
A misty prophecy of greatness hung.
Through breeding hours the master hand of time
Would paint her canvas in a light sublime,
Until her ringed effulgence beat the sky
With flasting flails, and starry dust blew high;

By Suns and Stars

But ere she won and dressed her noble part
She must descend and crucify her heart ;
And as she dipped, old Adam's soul went
 out,
And with it passed the grisly ghost of doubt.

His limp hand spilled the petals of the rose
In carmine shells, where dewy pearls repose,
And prowling winds, like vagrant things of
 prey,

Lipped at the stems and bore the blooms away.
These airy mantles of the world's bare breast,
Whose wings her broken lineaments caressed,
Though heavy with their scintillating load,
By moaning seas and lonely landscapes rode,
And in their flight where'er was heard the cry
Of anguish, or the sound of doleful sigh,
Down-dropped with softness as of snow, a leaf
In curling tenderness to soothe the grief.

And where the symbol fell, on stone or loam,
The tree of sympathy was rooted home,
And blossoms, thick as bees at Autumn's store,
The fondling branches with small effort bore.
Their incense ran about the naked lands
And joined in friendliness the fighting hands ;
The shrinking meek were robust at its blow,
And vigorous ambition stirred the low.

The Rose

The bony mask of human countenance
Went clear and limpid to a kindly glance;
And as a sun-shaft clears a secret wood,
So with these favours all men understood.

By Suns and Stars

THE SHRINE

I BUILT a shrine of wood and comely things,
Reaped from the ranges where the magpie sings,
With fairy strands from Nature's nightly loom,
And captivating colours on the bloom.
The dawning buds, with promise in each line,
Here in my temple wrought their full design.
The thorny mansions of the birds, whose bills
With just precision laid the certain sills,
Made for me domes to crown my faithful pile.
The bush's sun-browned off'rings paved the aisle
And hushed the hasty step, while virgin leaves
Threw mullioned tracery upon the eaves.

There were soft things that shyly came about,
With twitching coats and restive eyes of doubt,
When the black cape of night fell from the sky
And brushed the earth's domain with sable dye.
To these I gave no sign but sympathy,
With fingers crook'd and motions mild and free,
And each by friendly nibble or sly pace
Crept to the transept of my holy place.

The Shrine

No music fiddling on a silver lyre
Broke lofty anthems from an unseen choir,
But smooth communion in this sainted keep
Kept vigil through the stagnant hours of sleep.

When the young morn, with pink apologies,
Clambers the hills that hold the breaking seas,
My vestry captures all her glowing gaze,
And brings her, penitent, with drooping rays.
In the broad shields of ribbed and roughened
bark

Her rushing arrows fail to find a mark.
The white-flamed billows that her legion rolls
Stop, spent and scathed, before the blackened
holes.

Her flashing mirror, shattered by the boughs,
In silver splinters falls upon my brows.
As faint she lies, the curling tendrils bend,
And nurse her fleeting beauty to the end.

There were recesses where the writhing soul
Uncurled its agonies, and langour stole
Upon the fretted heart; where the sick life
Was washed and balmed and girded for new strife.
Here lay the barren purpose as it died,
The spoilt endeavour and the bitten pride,
The clouded promise and the frosted view,
Great principles debased and set askew.

By Suns and Stars

In these still chambers were the knotted strings
Of Fate's gay frolics, and her careless stings.
Here where poor hope was tainted with red rust,
All things that move us joined the common dust.

Then on one day the sky was smoked with
cloud,

While loosened thunders growled their rage aloud;
The tempest shook the masses of her mane,
Like a bathed hound, and beat the air with rain
And from this wrath, in dread accomplishment,
Inflamed and swift, a shaft of lightning went.
The Lord upon my workings laid the price
He called in blood for Abram's sacrifice.
By one grey puff, with sulphur in its train,
My artifice and pride was rent in twain.
All my inventions, all my bulwarked sum,
Levanted in a flash, and I was dumb.

Cinder and ash my relics were, and grief
That pawed to stony heaven for relief,
Till from a nestling spark new ardour rose,
Plumed and triumphant, as the phœnix grows,
And, planing to long heights where wisdom stood,
Looked at the world and saw the world was
good.

If purpose freezes, if the sword of fate
Slices our threads and overthrows our state,

The Shrine

By fault redeemed and error turned in true
We shall achieve the stairway to the blue.
Break into action, let each past regret
Teach us to work, and in that work forget.

By Suns and Stars

THE GATE

Two solemn columns held a mesh of rail,
With figures interwoven round a grail,
And strange embellishments of curve and line
That brewed new sauce for fancy's bread and wine.
Here was a tracery of subtle thought
In web, and there some mystic wonder wrought
In gloomy pediments, like hanging brows
That, waiting heavily upon the brain, arouse
The senses to possession and the zest
Of tickled action and sublime unrest.
All that men drew from their enriched estate
Was pictured here upon this single gate.

The virginal beginning of the vine
In trustful tendril framed the great design,
And fattened sheaves with drooping golden ears
Leant on the fleecy harvest of the shears.
The music of the magpie's morning note,
Warm with the fever of his joyful throat,
On bar and space within the gateway hung
In threaded harmonies of mouth and tongue;

The Gate

And stately images each side were set
To bear with dignity the coronet,
Fluxed with the rarest treasures of the earth,
That crowned the sharp and tortured ways of worth.

This was the gate where each man's enterprise
On sweated stone and metal might arise.
There was no disarray of incident;
All things conspiring to completeness bent.
The tinselled trinkets and the ribboned shows
That we aspire to hung in gaudy rows,
Yet to express the universal sense
The portal bloomed with buds of innocence.
The delicate illusion of high art
With touch assured was woven in each part.
So much displayed, so further much to see,
It was at once a truth and mystery.

Men thought a field of plenty lay beyond,
With starched and even forest and smooth pond.
There should be sleepful parks and shaded lawns
To mock the rainbow pennons of the dawns,
And places of contentment, where the rush
Of all our restless movement fell to hush;
Sly ingles, or, maybe, a shrouded couch
Whereby the meeker works of Nature crouch;
Some pleasant playground, where our furtive dreams
Grow into substance and fulfil their schemes;
Some gentleness and pity so sublime
That one weak tear would solve the salts of time.

By Suns and Stars

This was no mortal gate, though some have sworn
By the red crucifix and bleeding thorn
That on this track the light of knowledge glowed
As the full sun upon an open road;
That whoso passed the gate with faith in hand
Trode on a heritage of God-willed land.
Those who had galloped in the pleasant days
Here with clean pardon could abjure their ways.
The spirit of good trust, with cheerful song,
Scoffed at the laggards with their wail of wrong;
The swarm that came with prejudiced intent
Wavered a moment and then gatewards went.

But this crushed passage was a sleight of fate—
Who guides the multitude must set the gait—
And so the goal to which intention sprung
Was but a mirror on loose pivots hung.
Each man who gazed reflected his desires,
From flaming opulence to clouded fires;
He who looked upwards to the sweeping sun
Trampled the nettles, and the roses won;
While the bent porter with his shoulders sore
Craved for a short relief and nothing more.
Yet he who broke the mirror found the grave,
And then the verdict of the God who gave.

The Statue

THE STATUE

FAIR-FRONTED figure, set against the skies,
To watch the centuries with changeless eyes,
Repel with stolid strength the wasting blast,
And scatter seasons as the leaves are cast.
No breath of burning spirit stirred thy form
To whetted courage in the hour of storm ;
No dropping essence from the palm of life
Shook one reposeful sinew into strife ;
Yet time in vain employed his chiselled trade
On the clean lines the master hand had laid ;
His gathered elements the world might shock,
But fall defenceless by this sculptured rock.

But what of him whose touch and native tone
Gave heart and beauty to misshapen stone ;
Whose ache and agony the mother shares
When to the call Divine a child she bears ?
For no one thing from nothingness is born
But by excess and senses red and worn.
How fared the seed that shaken from the wind
Grew to such port and marvel in his mind ?

By Suns and Stars

What ground received the messenger of birth?
The thorns, the wayside, or the ready earth?
And when at hour forecasted came the call,
How shaped the artist, how received the call?

Let the clear words of wisdom give reply:
Except ye venture ye shall surely die,
For sloth consumes with bitter spreading rust
In the same measure as a lightning thrust.
He who must paddle on the guarded beach
No painted island or wide sea can reach.
For him no newborn pinnacle shall start
With thrilling suddenness upon his chart.
A lofty purpose, strengthened with high zeal,
Is worth a thousand prayers upon a wheel.
Ten talents may be given, but the one
Infused with ardour clambers to the sun.

Note, then, the artist who from Heaven drew,
On path invisible against the blue,
A thread of inspiration from the loom
Where the grey weavers piece the glint and gloom.
On him was laid with offertories stern
The burden of a gift and its return—
A gift inflamed with some celestial fire
That, burning, bred new flames for its desire,
And sucked the marrow of his furthest bone
To give anointment to an idle stone.
Thus doth the Lord, to fertilize the brain,
From his high threshing spare a living grain.

The Statue

In pool subdued, beneath the ocean's swell,
The placid oyster lies in scalloped shell,
Until by rough intrusion and assail
Some aimless irritant impairs his veil ;
Then with attempt and suffering profuse
He bathes the sorrow with his brilliant juice,
Lays smoothness on the wart, and to his ends
The roughened edges with fair lustre mends ;
And as each filmy circle draws in place,
With the bright humours of a bubble's face,
There were his selvage lay attacked and torn
Now by a miracle a pearl is born.

And so the tool with lively bite on dust
Gave symmetry and roundness to a bust.
Close-reined by patience, he outlined his task,
And pencilled Nature on a stony mask.
Enraptured was his soul, and in the glow
The marble yielded to persistent blow ;
And each frail mote that trickled in the light
Announced his service and assured his right.
A harvest swaying proudly in the sun
Sings of the furrows that the plough has won,
And that unchanging form with bloodless sword
Reveals the answered message of the Lord.

By Suns and Stars

THE ORATION

GOOD-BYE, my sweetheart, you have loved me well,
So well that all the fullness of the earth
Shakes into lifeless fragments at your knell,
And the blue realm of God is struck to dearth.
Our union was a thing so wide of breath,
So filled to full with throbbing tenderness
That each warm pulse and fibre challenged death,
And dared his coming with unarmed address.
Yet all these years our fortress so serene,
Our buttressed hold that anchored in the sea,
Bore no more strength than pictures on a screen,
Or flickers in the eye of destiny.

I will not here repeat our dainty days,
Those sanguine hours we drew from jewelled time,
When Venus and her maidens ventured praise,
And planned our motions to perfected rhyme,
Lest at my recklessness the jealous past
Should wither and erase one single fault,
Or let a stain with shade be overcast,
And so appear thee, flawless, in the vault.
Before Thy face, O Lord, I do declare
That each soft frailty bred abounding bliss;
I loved her with her soul unclothed and bare,
And on the blotches laid my warmest kiss.

The Oration

Oh, my beloved, whose abandoned form
I now enshrine beneath a marble keep,
So still and solid that no earthly storm
Could waft a spider's strand upon its sleep;
Let me presume no grossness on thy wing,
But gossamer as airy as the light,
When, by severe old death's release of sting,
Thy soul, uncased, is driven into flight.
May thy ascension be as smooth and free
As a furred cloud upon a pleasant wind,
Or those grey mists that gather on the sea,
And climb a stair of sunbeams intertwined.

Yet if a mould or rust should blemish thee
Before the holy angels and the throne,
May I by penances and bleak decree,
And writhings of the flesh, thy faults atone.
That I might make thee perfect in His sight
I would with serpents crawl upon the dust,
Bait this my body with the jackal's bite,
And wrestle at the kennels for a crust.
And yet, with sorrow's spikes upon my brow,
With this dull poison in my spirit's flow,
Though God and all the heavens might allow,
My most beloved, thou must never know.

By Suns and Stars

THE TORCH

I WAS alone, except the jewelled night,
The stolid stars stared imperturbably
At my poor spirit drifting to the light
From the last darkness of humanity.
When the red earth upon the casket lies,
And blots for ever all the beauty of the day;
When the clean soul, unnamed, breaks from its ties,
And, naked, struggles to the outer way.

I was alone upon a pulseless sea,
Where the horizon yawned to greater deep,
Where curdled shadows clustered sullenly
To press my eyelids in eternal sleep.
Here pain was tearless, sorrow had no sting,
Love was a threat, and hope a frosty chill;
All the emotions that, impassioned, ring
Through life's frail tabernacle here were still.

Then I recalled that one of those who stood
In awful circle round my bier that day
Kissed my dead face, for once I did him good,
And, shaken as with fever, crept away.

The Torch

Corruption and decay could not arrest
The loving tribute of his lips, nor freeze
The wave of tenderness that charged his breast—
Yet Death is only change to him who sees.

And with that thought, upon the black intense
There burnt the trembling fragments of a fire—
A beacon light within the vapours dense,
Where shipwrecked spirits, striving, might aspire.
Lean mariners are we who brave the tide
When Death, the mutineer, has shorn adrift
Our world-worn lines, yet lively in our pride
If in the darkened sky there breaks a rift.

That pointed flame upon the distance set
Swelled this my helpless self, in armament,
And with a forward, plunging stroke I met
The throatless void, and, lo! the shade was rent.
A pathway trickled through the shattered space,
Like moonbeams dropping on a shaken stream,
And on this bridge of fickle flakes a face
Lipped me to life from out my sombre dream.

By one sweet movement of a careless heart,
One sympathetic touch on life's machine,
A salving balm upon a wounded part,
The passages of death were made serene.

By Suns and Stars

Not one regard is voiced upon the earth
For those who venture through the narrow grave,
But that a torch is lighted for the birth
Of some stray soul within the murky cave.

Yet had my golden days been fitly trimmed
With beads of sympathy and love's red rose,
Had pity rested where she lightly skimmed,
And tenderness to sorrow brought repose,
This changeling soul would, on a placid keel,
Through avenues of white effulgence swim,
Amidst the harps and lyres and choral peal,
And, landing, render gratitude to Him.

The Invocation

THE INVOCATION

GIVE me, O Lord, of favours Thine,
No bolted castle on the Rhine—
Let courage strong against the wrong
Be foremost in my battle line.

If turbulent, wild voices rise
In heedless clamour to the skies,
With thought serene and honour clean,
And simple speech may I be wise.

Should I by Fate be charged with might,
I pray Thee set my moods aright—
No cunning rule to blind a fool,
But justice for my Lord's delight.

If I be plagued with Pharaoh's sin,
And pompous mettle hems me in,
Draw from my veins the prideful stains,
And stall me with my kith and kin.

By Suns and Stars

If wayward run the rolls of chance,
And I be pressed by circumstance,
 With kindly grace my wrath erase,
And pardon my intolerance.

And if I falter in the race
That men maintain for pelf and place,
 Make me content with what is sent,
And skyward let me set my face.

Though poverty with me may lie,
That meagre shape shall not deny
 The open bin and all within,
And shelter for the passer-by.

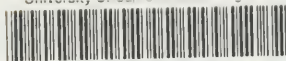
Yet these are minor chords I play,
To stir the passions of a day—
 A restless fret against things set,
And, wanting still, to Thee I pray.

Grant me, O Lord, of Thy right hand,
The limpid mind to understand
 The master key of sympathy,
And I will make no more demand.

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